

Ellie Collinson

From: Nicole Beauvais [zenobia28@hotmail.com]
Sent: Tuesday, June 14, 2005 2:51 PM
To: ellie@citizensproject.org
Subject: interviews

Ellie,

Here is what is done of the interviews(sorry there may be some errors I was typing pretty fast and may have missed some when I scanned back through), I am going out of town on thursday but I will contact Richard Skorman next week when I get back. Did I give you the folder with the lists Marj wrote up, if not I will drop it off tomorrow.

Thanks,
Nicole

Interview with Greg Walta-04/05/05

Nicole: I was talking with Greg, Ellie, and Barb, Greg did most of the talking we went over how everything got started but how did you fit into CP you were part of the board your name was mentioned as someone I should talk to but there was nothing specific as to your involvement.

Greg: Really I think this whole thing started, CP, with Doug and Amy and before they started it I don't think I really knew Doug and Amy but this whole thing started around the time of Amendment 2. and I read the amendment and it seemed transparently discriminatory and so I decided to do something about it I wasn't sure what I was going to do. I remember going to the first meeting, the first meeting that I went to was down at the congregational church up on or maybe Unitarian, one of the two, up on N. Tejon and it was kind of funny it was an eerie feeling because the town just seemed under siege and people were putting these diversity bumper stickers on cars and they were afraid that they were going to get vandalized run off the road and all that stuff, the town was really really up in arms and so, I joined citizens project that night I don't remember the date and ended up serving on the board I can't remember it might have been the first board I'm not sure

Nicole: Back in the 90's though?

Greg: Yeah and one of the things that I had ended up deciding to do was to purpose, an alternative an amendment repealing amendment 2 and so I was also involved in that I was also involved with Doug and Amy in trying to building the project but they were definitely the catalysts

Nicole: Were you there during the living room meetings

Greg: No it was after they had come out the living room meetings

Nicole: You already answered my question about individual motivation which was amendment 2

Greg: Yeah I had been involved in civil rights work throughout my career never seen gay rights as a civil rights issue for whatever reason but when the amendment came out and it was supposedly just an effort, they way they advertised it, an effort to prevent gays from having what they called special rights I

read the amend and it didn't say that, it stripped them of all their equalities and created in my mind a group of second class citizens and so at that moment it became a civil rights issue in my mind

Nicole: So what do you see as the hope of the original members and did it change during your time on the board

Greg: I think that the original focus was on trying to reverse amend 2 and it stayed that way until the supreme court decision striking down amend 2 and after that point I think that the effort grew to encompass other minority groups and to try to create coalitions with Black, Hispanic, women's groups and to try to effect change in the town

Nicole: What we wanted to know was what was the driving force that brought everyone together and that was amendment 2 was there anything else going on in Colorado Springs at the time was that the main focus?

Greg: I think that was the main focus it was the town had gotten the reputation of being the birthplace of wacky ideas and whether it was tax limitation ideas English only anything that was kind of anti progressive this town seemed to embrace and give birth to and have an impact state wide and I think that as things began to develop CP tried to snuff out or impact the new wacky ideas that came along later and I think with some success

Nicole: I was reading through the past Freedom Watches in the beginning they were really interesting what seems to me as obvious civil rights that we shouldn't be doing it and it's amazing this stuff was going on and still is so what do you think was your early impact on the community through your work and what were the milestones during your time on CP

Greg: Well on the amendment 2 issue it was to try to create a repeal amendment that basically took the two sides that there were the Christian conservatives were saying that they didn't want to deprive gays of any of their rights and education housing public accommodations they just wanted to prevent affirmative action gays were saying that they didn't want affirmative action they just wanted equal rights so I wrote up an amendment that said that that would repeal amend two and guarantee rights and employment public accommodations education and other things to gays but give them the benefit of any affirmative action program and when the court struck down amend 2 that amend effort was abandoned but I think it kind of defined the issue the Christian conservatives, the Will Perkins and Kevin Tibidoes (?) were unwilling to take that concession it was clear that they really did want inequality for gays so on that issue Doug and Amy and citizens project worked with me and I worked with them and so that was my main impact on amend 2 issue then on post amend 2 because of civil rights work in the past I had contacts with the Black community I brought some black members onto the board and started trying to knit together this coalition so I think I had some role in that

Nicole: I don't know if you met but there was a meeting in the fine arts center in the early 90's and everybody had a different story for it were you there for that I guess there are some tall tales going around about lines out the door it was said to be CP's main emergence into society

Greg: At the fine arts center boy nope I don't think I was there

Nicole: That might be right before you came on it was right after they got out of the living room, Greg was really interested to find out what really happened there after amend 2 was ruled unconstitutional was it hard to regain direction for the group after putting so much effort into it

Greg: I don't think so I think it was seen as a vindication and I think that the group already had of a concept that the fight was bigger than this, amend 2 was only one of the wacky ideas that this town was capable of and it turned out to be true the anti affirmative amendments came later and I can't remember them all but the basic philosophy of the group was these amendments carried because the town would vote for them two to one and if we could chop that down maybe 55/45 damn thing would lose and I think we did that

Nicole: How did Cp interact with other organizations during this period?

Greg: Well I think the effort was to get the main line civil rights groups, the old groups NAACP, Urban League and others to recognize that this was a civil rights violation because there was a division in the black community over that with some saying we're born black these people have a choice there was a scope of discrimination its a loss of focus to focus on gay rights our job wasn't finished and here comes a new job there was that feeling in some of the black community but I think the prevailing view was that the discrimination is a mindset and that you can pretty well bet that if someone has a mindset to discriminate against gays they have the same mindset with respect to blacks and that the black community needed to join in the fight and I think the leadership pretty much went that way and the black community in general was divided on it I'm sure

Nicole: I don't know if you would know this but Barb doesn't have any records beyond a certain point of who was in the starting membership and who were the early donors

Greg: Because I came into things at a point where I really had very little understanding where it had been before so I don't think I can really reliably give you anything.

Nicole: You saw the change of the organization from more of a grassroots to a more stable organized organization do think the goals changed during this time as it moved from that.

Greg: Well we've already talked about how it moved from amend 2 to a broader diversity plan to try to change the way the government worked here to try to change the way the people thought about the town and trying to reach out to places like the chamber of commerce the corporate structure to basically get the point across that the town was suffering because of these images of an intolerant community and it went beyond the issue of gays it went all the way across the spectrum of big corporations like a diverse workforce they have a diverse workforce and it was the wall street journal articles about how white bread Colorado Springs was and how its hard for places like MCI and others to bring their workforce here it was a lot more uncomfortable here and so there was the effort to try to build a connection with the business community and say we really want a first class town we got to address this issue and I don't think it still has but.

Nicole: What was your reason for leaving the board?

Greg: I think you get to a point where you kind of seen it all and you kind of have used up your ideas and said what have to say and when you start feeling that way I think its just time to step aside and let new people come in and breathe new life into the organization.

Nicole: Is there anything else you would like to add?

Greg: It's been a hell of an organization!

Interview with Frank Whitworth-04/15/05

Nicole: Do you want to explain what Ground Zero is?

Nicole: What was your involvement in CP?

Frank: Well my involvement was always through my through Ground Zero we worked together on many projects we had many of the same goals they were truly supportive of Ground Zero and the amendment 2 issue which was my principle issue at the time though I've been involved in Civil Rights movements since 1956 so I've been around the corner a couple of times and I certainly understand their broader scope of pluralistic society and so I've always supported that as we became mutually involved in a lot of organizations and so forth that were had similar goals or partial goals one of my main goals as executive director of Ground Zero was the building of coalitions so I was a member of just about everything going in town at that time in fact I founded half of it it seems like and Amy Divine founded the other half

Nicole: So were talking the early 90's then

Frank: Yeah were talking 92' was when amendment 2 passed and I was not the fine Arts museum meeting in early 93' then

Nicole: I think so, that was one of my questions

Frank: I don't remember the day I just remember being there and just being stunned by the number of people that showed up

Nicole: Greg Borom, the old director, that was one of his big questions was what really happened at that meeting because there is so much lore to it now

Frank: Well it certainly dominated Amendment 2 dominated the issue and the truth is amendment 2 drove a lot of civil rights organizations and organizations like CP even organization like NAACP and Urban League because that whole issue of amendment 2 forced a discussion and reevaluation of Civil Rights in general and the tolerance and what society should be and so amendment 2 became a catalyst not just for gay rights but for discussion of the position of minorities in the community tolerance in the community what this community should be visibly the world and to its citizens and so a lot of that was there at the meeting it was just huge

Nicole: If you had to guess at a number

Frank: Well the auditorium was full and so was the outside in the halls and so forth I've forgotten what the auditorium fits is it 400

Nicole: I'm not sure I could probably find out

Frank: Well I would say that there were 400 to 500 people there easily and that's huge in this town for a progressive organization and an organization around at that time the main topic was a gay issue and I mean we kept spinning to tolerance in general but of course the focus gang would keep spinning it, its really about queers and so that was part of one of the I mean our whole reason for being was to be the visible voice in the community to counter Focus on the Family and Will Perkins and Colorado for Family Values and things and CP did a great deal of that because they were a non gay organization I mean certainly there were a large number of gay members we were huge supporters but they were a non gay organization promoting tolerance and pluralism and equal rights and so forth so it was really exciting and the meeting was exciting rah rah there was a lot of energy and it was just amazing

Nicole: Did you see it as CP's main emergence into society with that meeting

Frank: It was certainly a defining moment I would have to say it was the defining moment for CP I mean I'm sure there were many meetings when they talked about what they were about their mission their vision but it became reality I think at that you know and people more input and a broader community input and a starting of building of a great networks and webs and coalitions and collaborations and understandings between groups and individuals

Nicole: After amendment 2 was beaten was that your...

Frank: Well amendment wasn't beaten it was passed oh but you mean we're jumping ahead a long ways, it was immediately put on hold by the courts but it was 1996 before the US Supreme Court ruled it unconstitutional

Nicole: Was your involvement with CP over after that

Frank: No I mean we were still going I stayed on at Ground Zero through it remained in existence till the fall of 98' I was there until the end of 97' as executive director and so we still had a great deal of work especially in collaborations my philosophy was that the gay community needed to be out in the community and our philosophy was that you would go to an NAACP meeting and become a part of what they were doing you didn't ask them to support you, you rolled your sleeves and started working with them and let them learn who your were it wasn't that we were going to these organizations and saying hey we're queers they're discriminating against us we went there and said you're being discriminated against we want to help and so we were involved in a lot of organizations that way even up until I left I think unfortunately today a lot of that is gone certainly some of us individually have those ties but I don't we have that collaborative spirit and that driving need to bring about change that we had that amendment 2 was the catalyst for

Nicole: I'm just trying to figure out what questions to ask you because pertain to board members

Frank: Who suggested that you talk to me

Nicole: Greg did

Frank: And I think you need to because I think you need to about those organizations that were closely allied and how we worked together and so forth and very important and like I say even though I never I was, I don't know why I've never been a board member of CP I mean I helped found and board member the ACLU, I helped found and board member the Colorado Springs Minority Coalition I help found and was a board member of Citizens for Responsible County Government and Voters Network I'm a founder but I just never seemed to get on the board of you know they had plenty going there and I had other things going but we were going in the same direction

Nicole: So it was never a big need to be on the board there

Frank: Well we had the connection and there was a connection in those days Amy Divine and I were close, the then directors and I were close and so we worked together as executive directors of co-spirited organizations

Nicole: Well that was my question was how did CP interact with other organizations

Frank: Well they were there and they were very important part of a lot of organizations through support and a lot of organizations were important to CP through support and so it very mutual thing I really miss it in that sense its not that CP while Ground Zero's gone the people are still here and there are other

organizations but that connection isn't as strong as it was even though we've worked together on some projects including the domestic partnership project which was very significant and CP took a lead role

Nicole: So Ground Zero was mainly just about amendment 2

Frank: No see that it was about gay involvement amendment 2 became almost a can't say a side issue because from 1992 to 1996 I probably did thousands of interviews papers all over the world BBC, CBS, ABC, NBC you name it I interviewed with it and they were always interested in it and every time it would die out a little something else would happen and all of them would be back here again and then of course when the decision was made it was huge and CP and Ground Zero co-supported celebrated that but I don't think Ground Zero as a mission had as its principle mission to bring about recognition of gay and lesbian citizens and their positive benefit to the community and bring about rights but also we were there to support and be a part of supporting the civil rights movement and tolerance in Colorado Springs so we really broadened our horizons at first when it was very narrow when we first came into business it was very narrow and our big debate was whether to support the boycott of Colorado or not and I was those right at the very first that decided to but long before the boycott was over we had decided that a boycott was not something we decided a boycott was decided by people outside of the state and what we sent was a message that whatever you do whether you boycott or you come to the state and march that is a decision you make but you must make a decision and take a stand and so as an example a hotel calls me and says we have some people that want to cancel their convention here because of the boycott and this happened to be a gay friendly hotel so our opinion was we wrote a letter to the convention saying that we neither endorsed nor opposed the boycott but that that's a decision that you'll have to make but this particular hotel has been extremely supportive and gay friendly and so we would endorse your coming to town on that basis and the same thing happened with a ballet troupe and I'll think of their name huge ballet troupe they were not going to come they were going to cancel an Aspen show and what we would say to these groups if you come you have to do something to educate on the issue and so over at Broadmoor as an example and the Broadmoor opposed amendment 2 by the way, and also Broadmoor was one of the first businesses in the area to have domestic partners over at the Broadmoor people left they suspended the conference and they came downtown and demonstrated around City Hall to educate and the palabra ballet I think of it in a minute in Aspen suspended the ballet to have a question and answer period and that we went and they also donated money to have projects or to have things going, that was fun too I probably I stray from your central theme

Nicole: Why was it that Ground Zero broke up

Frank: I don't know I think if you start talking to people that were around when Ground Zero was at the vortex of everything and we were behind and lit just about every group in town when I decide to leave and quite frankly the board and I no longer agreed on some issues we didn't part unhappy I just said you have your way I have my way I said you resign as a board and let me form a new one or I'll leave but we are not going to continue to work like this because you want me to go here and I want to go here so I left but I don't think that they that the energy was left they had burned out I mean literally burned we one of our requirements of our board members was they had to be members of they had to be active members of three other organizations that were non gay and things like that I think it just burned out the drive of amendment 2 was gone it was not longer an issue there were other issues school board issues would stir us up and we would appear Mike Miles usually as a matter of fact and I would speak they would speak we would interview they would interview we would have educational programs they would have educational programs but I don't think the drive was there and they fiddled around for eight months after I left and it was one of those things of someone becoming too important to an organization which I probably did and at the same time during the times we were doing that it was almost like you were driving from one issue to another without any time from a breath and analyzing it I think I became too important to the organization I mean to its continuance but I had to move on in my life too and at

some point you have to make those decisions I was hoping they would find someone to move them forward and I supported them to do that and never negatively spoke about it about them and always encouraged support for them afterwards but they just didn't have the drive anymore

Nicole: Is there anything else you would like to add

Frank: Yes one little thing that CP's importance in this community has continued now we've done things like the tolerance programs what were they called I was apart of them and can't remember over at Colorado College and the meetings that went on for months and months for almost two years on tolerance and the community were vastly important the support that CP has given to not just themselves but to organizations all over town letting organizations umbrella under them to exist and to do mailings for them and all that sort of things has been a tremendous tremendous benefit to this community one of my goals with Voters Network is to establish a progressive community a viable progressive community in Colorado Springs but they've planted those seeds and we worked together on that we often would work side by side on certain issues we're a little more activist they're a little more sort of like the Urban League and the NAACP thing

Interview with Margie Duncombe-04/22/05

Nicole: I have a series of about nine questions, first of all what were you years with CP

Margie: I first got involved when Richard Skorman asked me to join a group of people who were meeting in Amy Divine and Doug Triggs' living room and that must have been spring of 92' because it was leading up to the amendment 2 campaign which was the fall of 92' election and Richard said that there's this interesting group of people who are worried about what's going on in Colorado Springs

Interview with Doug Triggs, Amy Divine, and Marj Webster-04/24/05

Nicole: During the living room meetings do you remember who was in attendance for those

-During this time Marj and Amy wrote out a list of people that they though were there during the living room (kitchen cabinet) meetings, the discussion is to themselves for the most part below is a list of the people that they came up with.

Nicole: What was your individual motivations to starting this organization

Amy: Naïveté, no that was part of it

Doug: Both of us graduated from the University of Michigan where student activism was highly prized and when this situation came up in Colorado Springs our first thought was let's start a group that's what people did back in that day

Amy: Some of the specific incidents, there was supposed to be a diversity panel at Palmer, one of the high schools and at the last minute Chuck Baker said they're going to have a pagan speaking at the school and they got calls and the pagan was uninvited and so we were pretty riled about that and then there were some Punzy(?) do you remember Punzy(?) it was a book that was being challenged censored in District 20 and then amendment 2 was on the horizon so I think those three things were the main, Cowboys for Christ in Woodland Park I don't remember much about them but you're right there was something with Cowboys for Christ

Marj: They were, the story I always heard again this was before this was when I was still in Seattle was that they raised an issue saying if you're going to teach Greek mythology in the high school in Woodland Park you also have to teach Christianity, you have to give Christianity equal time if you're teaching religion in the school and this before most people realized that there was that connection between the Cowboys for Christ and ... and all the underground stuff that was going on in the 90's.

Amy: and the diversity panel wasn't at Palmer High School because it was at a trade school it was older it was students who were between 18 and 21 and that was part of what made it so offensive was that they were adults and I keep calling it a trade school because I don't recall the name of the program but that was part of it so it was motivated by that but our expectations were much smaller we thought ok Chuck Baker says something 50 people make phone calls we need to find 50 to make phone calls and that was sort of our vision of what CP would be was a small voice, a counterbalance, to have a balancing voice but we anticipated, we didn't anticipate a large organization growing out of it

Nicole: So Marj what was your motivation to become part of it?

Marj: I had been living in Seattle, I grew up in Colorado Springs, and I had been living in Seattle for a few years, moved back to Colorado Springs and by the time I got here which was at the end of the election at the very end of 1992 CP had been identified with amendment 2 and was the only group who was publicly together at that point speaking out against amendment 2 shortly there after Ground Zero was formed and so CP wasn't the only voice during that as time progressed but it was just so appalling to move from liberal Seattle to backwater Colorado Springs and be right in the middle where amendment 2's spawning ground so I was looking for a group to join to speak up

Amy: Kind of more of an overview is that I think for as Doug and I always talked about in the beginning what appalled us was that the voice of the Christian right seemed to be really unchallenged that that was what would get the coverage that was what would get, it seemed far more powerful than in fact that group of people we think was but because nobody else was saying anything so the feel is that we need another voice out there

Nicole: What do you as the hopes of the original members and how did it change over the last decade?

Marj: When you say original members are talking about the public at large or the people who started the organization

Nicole: The people who started the organization

Doug: I would say that the hopes of the originals was to have an impact and broadly defined like that we got to weave and change and did different things and I think we had some sort of impact

Nicole: So then the hopes wouldn't have as you say changed over the last decade, to have an impact

Doug: Yeah my impression was given Colorado Springs an impact was the most you could hope for that continues to be my view and we've been away from the Springs for 4 or 5 years

Amy: Yeah I think I would agree I think the initial hopes were to that there be another voice that there be maybe a not a central point for a progressive voice exactly but a place that people could come back to town and find recognize a community that in a sense create a sense of community and that would then have an impact by virtue of being visible

Doug: Maybe create a sense of hope too

Amy: Yeah because there certainly was a sense of hopelessness when we began

Marj: And remember there was no Independent there was no other, Springs Magazine was there but it so focused on arts and culture that it people did not look to it for any kind of political view point or certainly wasn't going to be in a position to present the other side against Focus on the Family and so the Gazette was the only game in town and it was much more conservative back then because it had nobody to challenge it nobody to move it towards the center no competition in the marketplace if you wanted the news you had to get the Gazette there was no place else to turn and of course the TV coverage wasn't interested in getting into this kind of controversy but the Gazette loved to lots of it

Doug: Before we came along there was no one to get a quote from because the Gazette...Focus on the Family said such and such and CP said such and such and that was their whole balancing act and then they would go on down the road.

Amy: I can't address also if it's changed because we've been gone, Marj might have a better feel

Marj: Yeah its changed, I think so and I think its reflected in the membership, the membership in the organization is a lot smaller than it was back then and we didn't work hard in the 90's to drive up membership, it was just people flocked to CP and started donating money unasked because they were it was like what can I do, oh here's this organization let me give them so money so that they can help represent my point of view in the marketplace of ideas and we had 1200 contributing members and a mailing list that was 4000 that included politicians and school board people and administration, school administrators and a big group but the paid membership was much higher

Amy: I thought paid membership was higher too

Marj: You know I think paid membership was higher at one point and that number is sticking in my head as something that's reliable and... but I think it was higher and at one point we were mailing 6000 with national news

Amy: I thought one of the more significant things when we first started when the first article came out in the Gazette we were flooded with phone calls and the line people kept saying over and over again was I thought I was alone and I think that was what drove the initial burst of energy and the initial formation because then suddenly we had hundreds of people saying I want to volunteer I want to help what can I do and suddenly it was this monster taking off and the first public meeting where 800 people came

Nicole: How did you first gather people, how did you get the people into the living room meetings?

Amy: The living room meetings started with Doug and I sitting at breakfast saying lets do this and then we just called well Richard was the first person we called and Richard really knew most of the other people we didn't know that many people so I think he invited that most of that initial list of people

Discussion between Amy and Marj about who knew who on the list.

Amy: So we just talked to people we knew, Richard went out and recruited people he knew and that formed that initial

Nicole: How did you know Richard

Amy: I had moved to the Springs town years earlier and had volunteered...

Interview with Megan Day-04/25/05

Nicole: So I was talking with Amy and Doug and Marj yesterday and they said that your years were 95' to 2000 is that correct?

Megan: Definitely 95', it was 2001 spring but I came back a little bit like late July and August just to kind of wrap things up

Nicole: And that's when Greg took over?

Megan: Yes well no I 'm sorry no because that was during the process where they were hiring and so he started as executive director I'm not sure which month but it was in that year in 2001 but it wasn't right after I left.

Nicole: What was your individual motivation or was it just more of a job or was there some pull to the organization?

Megan: well in my interview sitting down with Richard Skorman and I think Peg Bacmon and Marj were the three people that interviewed me they asked me the same thing why do you want to do this job and against some advice that I had heard about not saying that you want to work there because your believe in it that's what I said that the mission was something I believe in that was my motivation. That's what I wanted to do was work for something I believe in and I felt it was playing a really important role in the community

Nicole: What were the goals of Cp during your time and did they change as the organization moved from more of a grassroots to a more stable planned out...

Megan: The goals when I came on board lets see well to be a watchdog for the religious right and to provide a counter message and agenda within the community i would say that the watchdog during my time there the role of the watchdog the purposing a counter message a pluralistic message of message of a fair and equal community in whatever shape that took became more important or prominent I would say so it would be less sort of revealing what was going on but saying here's what's going on and here's what we need to do instead, I think it was a bit of a shift while I was there I think Amy in particular was very interested in making the insuring that the organization had a credible voice a moderate credible voice in the community and I think I really tried to build on that to make it more credible within the community and I think that helped I think it worked

Nicole: More of a voice for everyone instead of it being I think what she was talking about was that they didn't want to be too forceful and then...

Megan: Well that was another of my goals at least and I tried to build on Amy's because I really agreed with her and she was such a mentor to me was strategy wise not necessarily goal wise I always felt that it was important to educate and not be alarmist I was really pushed by people who were so angered by

what was going on in the community to be alarmist to raise the red flag you know go on the war path and just attack individuals and organizations for what they were doing and I tried very hard not to do that because I felt it would undermine our credibility in the long run and so to be a voice for fair and balanced public policy local politics etc you had to act in a fair and balanced way to gain that credibility and so perhaps we lost some support and some membership as a result but I think we gained others no we gained people who were interested in those goals and we gained credibility among community leaders and institutions and that was critical in having any kind of impact with what we wanted to accomplish and the agenda that we had

Nicole: How did you develop a new identity there as the original members became less important and less active?

Megan: Very good question I think as issues arose the constituents would follow as long as we took a leadership role in addressing them we would find new constituents and new members who were recognizing our work addressing whether it be you know some issue at the school board level so you know I had a real focus on education and I think after me they pulled away from that a bit which was fine it was just something that I felt we needed to focus on so whether it be you know we're looking we were organizing around the parental rights and the parental rights amendment the so called parental rights amendment which was basically an out of state right wing underhanded agenda to promote vouchers and undermine organizations protecting children I was very active in that the organization was as well and it built a new constituency of people who recognized the work that CP did via the league of women voters or the catholic community services the Lutheran family services these are all organizations that I reached out to build a network to oppose this amendment who were recognizing CP perhaps for the first time for what we were doing and you know always building coalitions around issues I think is the way we did that

Nicole: So mainly education during your time then was there any...

Megan: I had a big focus on advocacy you know for both of the vouchers state wide amendments I took full advantage of the legal opportunity that we had as a 501C3 to oppose the ballad initiative and in the case of amendment 3 to support it and then to organize our local community around that so education was a piece and fair and balanced education to expose a problem or an issue rather than be alarmist about it but make sure people knew what the issue was but certainly advocacy I really thought that that was the most effective way to implement our mission

Nicole: So what were the strategic plans during this time and that's what you just talked about your advocacy...

Megan: We did develop for the first time a strategic plan and revised it while I was there and I can't site it word for word but it did at least my interpretation was some strong advocacy on issues and focusing on elections to educate but also advocate when it came to issues not campaign ever and we were very, I tried to educate myself really well on the difference and make sure we followed the law to the tee, and but also make sure others knew so many people don't understand that as an organization you can take a stand on an issue and some organizations can even endorse candidates if you are a 501C4 so education advocacy focusing on local issues where we could have an impact

Nicole: Why was it important to back away from statewide and focus more on local issues and re-identifying with the local community?

Megan: We're a local organization I mean there was talk about whether we could become a statewide organization but you cant from Colorado Springs and if we were to be based here we would be most

effective on issues here and nobody listens to Colorado Springs in Denver so why bother trying but at the same time you all policies local you can have a big impact and as we've seen with amendment 2 and vouchers and so many things we are sort of this Petri dish for a lot of the right wing ideas and initiatives so if we can address it here effectively we save the rest of the state and country a lot of the time from having to deal with the same issues so we felt it was important to be active locally and there was plenty of need locally be it the Colorado for Family values and their local agenda the effort to push sort of a mini amendment 2 on the city I think we were very effective in those efforts because we focused locally

Nicole: Do you have any recognizable milestones during your time

Megan: I think so I think the 26 member coalition that we put together to oppose the parental rights amendment and the success meaning that percentage wise it was a 50/50 vote in Colorado Springs and this is not too long after amendment 2 which was a 2 to 1 vote in Colorado Springs in favor of it so just neutralizing Colorado Springs in the Statewide election meant that it failed miserably statewide and we were very effective so that's our statewide organizing right there so parental rights amendment organizing locally to oppose vouchers and helping lead to the statewide defeat of two vouchers initiatives insuring the defeat of the effort to have a city version of amendment 2 we put together Springs together another coalition and they got anywhere we were ready if had gotten it on the ballot but we I think pulled the wind out of their sails before they could get anywhere so that effective and really successful and helping to ensure that the school board wasn't taken over by right wing individuals with an anti public school agenda didn't happen while I was there because that was one of my big focuses or priorities was to get out to vote for local elections and I think we did that among our constituents very well I think I really improved the candidate survey process and publication we revised Freedom Watch to make it really sort of CP's newsletter and change that which I understand what they did in the first place and I think it was really effective it was time for a change to really make it more of a message-piece a voice of CP

Nicole: How did you go about that change...

Megan: Well we there was a lot of change I mean Doug was doing all of Freedom Watch at first and then it came to me and so I became to editor and after awhile we went through a major lay out revision we tried to put in a lot more graphics we put CP sort of as the masthead, Freedom Watch was as sort of a subhead

Nicole: You started dealing our more articles to people to write?

Megan: Yeah and so I was more of an editor than the writer of the entire thing and I thought that was good it brought more voices it made things more sort of I tried to make it more succinct more journalistic you know short paragraphs so its more readable less text more graphic so that we would reach a broader audience it wasn't just as newsletter for our membership but like in the beginning which I think was just the genius of Amy and Doug was to put it into the Independent and we wanted to make sure people didn't assume it was a publication of the Independent which many people did especially the survey everyone's like oh yeah the Independent's Candidate survey well we paid to put it in and we put a lot of time and money and energy into producing it so we should get the credit so that was sort of an effort and a strategy

Nicole: How do you think CP interacted with other organizations during your time?

Megan: It was a major goal of mine to again always be building coalitions as a way to build constituencies to gain credibility to be more effective and to really push other organizations to be involved in the issues we were addressing and to take a stand so that we wouldn't be the only ones out there and ostracized

Nicole: Were there certain ones that you worked a lot with more than others?

Megan: League of Women voter I think we worked a lot with, Urban League Ground Zero at the time and then the gay and lesbian community center

Nicole: Were gay and lesbian rights still a big issue during your time after Amendment 2 had been ruled unconstitutional was it more of...

Megan: Yeah it was just in different areas be at the school board level you know that was another huge issue where we were in the end successful in our agenda Colorado for family values trying to push the sexual conduct policy on district 11 600 people in a school board meeting that kind of thing focusing the message and getting out to the people and organizing and again another coalition effort PTA PTO always worked very closely with the Colorado Springs education association and the Pikes Peak education association and I thought that was great to push them well I didn't have to push anybody with Dan Cohen there he was so great I learned so much from him but he was very in tuned to the need to make sure that the school board was balanced and that this was a professional organization and not just a union and that they needed to act as such and be involved in these issues that affected student achievement and the direction of the school board and as such the district

Nicole: What ultimately was your reason for leaving?

Megan: I had a number of reasons for leaving it was time six years it was time

Nicole: I can understand that it was a burnout...

Megan: Yeah I had a child and yeah...

Nicole: Do you still stay active at all in it?

Megan: I needed to step back for a long time because of the burnout and because I didn't want to complicate things I wanted to give Greg free reign to do whatever he wanted and to be respected in that role and not have me interfering and sort of cause I'm opinionated and I can't really shut up about those things so just let him have his leadership role and not try to you know so that was another reason to step back I tried to sort of get back involved to some extent but you know especially to be supportive of Ellie as somebody who I have worked with in a different context and another CC grad and you know she also used to work here too and I think she'll do a fabulous job and just being in a meeting with her recently for something else and she's saying how some of the challenges that she faced starting at 24 and I'm thinking boy I started at 23 so it's the same issue I was not the director I was the coordinator at first but bottom line I was the only employee so I wanted to be supportive of her and her efforts and of course I am a wonderful fan of Greg, I hired him and he was such a pleasure to work with so

Nicole: Was there a lot of pressure coming down from the board because you were the first real director after Amy cause from what they told me there was a series of unsuccessful directors and you were the first one that really could fill the position after Amy left

Megan: Well they didn't hire me as director they hired me as basically someone to run the place and let the board of directors be the leadership which was defiantly what happened at first but you can't have somebody as staff a sole staff person that doesn't end up in some leadership role so I was ready I didn't want to just be some office assistant and that was a concern when I first took the job they're only going to expect me answer phones or something and just out of necessity it became much more and I was

ready for that it was what I wanted

Nicole: So it was an easy transition

Megan: Yeah it was gradual it wasn't one day boom I was director it sort of like they were just going to call me what I was doing already in a way but my style is always very facilitative I try to get input on issues and instead of just going off on my own especially with a grassroots organization you can't do that you have to be in coalition certainly with your board of directors if not with a lot other organizations and individuals so pressure from the board no the board wasn't all that organized for much of the time that I was there to have very clear a kind of heavy expectation

Nicole: Is there anything else you would like to add

Megan: I'm sure you've heard from Amy and Doug I guess if you're writing the history of CP so many people perceive it as a gay and lesbian rights organization and I always have to explain that no we actually started because of the incident in Woodland Park with... there were a lot of other issues its just we never shied away from addressing gay and lesbian rights its such a hot button issue that its all anyone can focus on and some areas and so I'm glad we never shied away from it but its come with that stereotype from the broader community that that's all we are, I'm really glad that they have revised the mission statement I think it needed to be updated, revised, reinvigorated and I was hoping that that would happen while I was there but the board didn't think so so I didn't get anywhere with that and I didn't push too hard because it just wasn't the right time for me to be pushing that through but I glad that happened I think it really needed to happen to continue to speak to the broader community be relevant and be effective in the community so that was something I really think needed to happen and it happened and its great I think the organization is continuing to professionalize and institutionalize its just heading down the road of a life cycle of a nonprofit and that's really good to see and systems being put into place and so I think at one point kind of when I was leaving some individuals wanted to make it a really high profile high powered institution that was possibly going statewide or just much bigger or more important than it was currently and I am very conservative in terms of financially and in terms of what I think we can do and do well and so there was a bit of seeing things differently and so it never, I left, and financially they couldn't do a lot of the things they the big visions that they had and so I'm so glad that they hired Greg because there was a real possibility that everything could fall apart but it didn't because they hired Greg and he knew what was going on all the issues and so that was really important I think for the continuity and effectiveness of the organization which is why they did that and revising the mission statement I think is great and position the organization well for the future

